"La Billardière speaks (I. ch. v. pp. 230-231) of native rafts 'which are only fit for crossing the water when the sea is very tranquil; otherwise they would soon be broken asunder by the force of waves.' In describing one rude raft found on the western shore of Adventure Bay, he says (II. ch. xi. pp. 80-81): 'It was made of the bark of trees; in shape nearly resembling that which is represented in the plate [in his book], being as broad, but not so long by more than a third. The pieces of bark that composed it were of the same structure as that of the Eucalyptus resinifera, but its leaves were much thinner. These pieces had been held together by cords, made of the leaves of grasses, forming a texture of very large meshes, most of which had the form of a pretty regular pentagon.' Rossel, who was La Billardière's companion, describes them thus (I. ch. iv. p. 93): 'On the shore of our little bay we found some sort of canoes (pirogues), seven to nine feet long, equally flat above and below. Their width was from three to four feet in the middle, diminishing to each of their two extremities, which ended in a point. They were made of very thick bark of trees, joined parallelly, and fastened together with reeds, or other fibrous grasses. They were, indeed, but very small rafts, to which had been given the form of a canoe.' Péron (ch. xii. p. 225) speaks of the canoe being 'formed of three rows of bark roughly joined together and held by thongs of the same nature' (i. e. not of grass). The drawing he gives is almost identical with La Billardière's. Mrs.

Meredith's description is very different. She calls the vessels rafts, and says of them (p. 139): 'They were formed of many little bundles of gum-tree, tied with grass, first separately, and then bound together in the required form, thick and flat, without any attempt at the shape of a boat or canoe, and not keeping the passenger above water when used, but just serving to float him on the surface. In, or rather on, these, the natives sat and paddled about with long sticks, or drifted before the wind and tide; and in calm weather frequently crossed over from the mainland to Maria Island; on such occasions they provided a little raised platform on the raft, on which they carried some [163] lighted fuel to kindle their fire when they arrived there.' Robinson, who, according to Calder, called this raft a machine, said it was only used by the natives of the south and west coasts. He describes it as 'of considerable size, and something like a whale-boat, that is, sharp sterned, but a solid structure, and the natives in their aquatic adventures sat on the top. It was generally made of the buoyant and soft velvety bark of the swamp tea-tree (Melaleuca, sp.), and consisted of a multitude of small strips bound together.... Common sticks, with points instead of blades, were all that were used to urge it with its living freight through the water, and yet I am assured that its progress was not so very slow. My informant, Alexander M'Kay, told me they were good weather judges, and only used this vessel when well assured there would be little wind and no danger, for an upset

would have been risky to some of the men, who.... were not always good swimmers' (Calder, Journ. pp. 22-23).

According to Dove (I. p. 251), a species of bark or decayed wood, whose specific gravity appears to be similar to that of cork, provided them with the means of constructing canoes. The beams or logs were fastened together by the help of rushes or thongs of skin. From the accounts thus given it will be seen that either the construction varied very much, or that the early travellers were not accurate observers."

1: Roth--163-164 (No date) 1890 Tasmanians
116, 501, 396

"Jeffreys gives a totally different account from any of the above. He says: 'Their canoes have been very inaccurately described, but in fact, they do not appear to have very frequent use for these vessels, as they but seldom visit the coast.... When, however,.... they come to...the sea, a large river, or a lake, they make canoes from the adjoining woods. These, when formed, are not unlike a catamaran, and are sufficiently large to support from six to ten persons in crossing the largest rivers. These canoes are formed by the trunks of two trees about thirty feet long, and laid in a parallel direction, at a distance of five or six feet from each other, and are kept in that position by four or five lesser pieces of wood, fastened at each end by slips of tough bark. In the middle is a cross timber of considerable thickness, and the whole interwoven with a kind of wicker-work. This flat and completely open canoe, or rather float, is made to skim along the surface of the water, by means of paddles, with amazing rapidity and safety. The natives are frequently seen on them near the southern mouth of the Derwent, between Isle Bruné and [164] the main, when the canoes are often found deserted, after they have answered the immediate purpose for which they were constructed' (pp. 126-128)."